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RUSSIA CREATES A FRAMEWORK FOR EAST EUROPEAN FEDERATION

RECENT indications that the United States and Britain may be on the point of clarifying their policy toward Europe—with specific reference to France and Italy—are welcomed by all who had felt growing uneasiness over the dangerous lag in the political strategy of the Western powers. Such clarification has been made imperative by the bold bid for influence in post-war Europe announced by the U.S.S.R., whose military advances, unlike those of the British and Americans, are closely meshed with political plans. This is the real significance of the statement of Premier Molotov to the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. in Moscow on February 1 that the sixteen Union republics now composing the Union will henceforth enjoy the right to pursue their own foreign policy, and raise their own armed forces which are to form component parts of the Red Army.

CHARACTER OF U.S.S.R. Molotov's announcement opens up far-reaching vistas for the war and post-war activities of the U.S.S.R. among its neighbors in Europe and Asia. No one familiar with the Soviet Union, as established by the basic treaty of 1922 between the four original republics (the Russian S.S.R., the Ukrainian S.S.R., the White Russian S.S.R., and the Transcaucasian S.S.R.), can pretend that the sixteen republics will enjoy independence in international affairs in the sense in which this term has been hitherto understood. The largest of the constituent republics remains, as in 1922, the Russian S.S.R., which includes more than nine-tenths of the area and more than two-thirds of the population of the pre-1939 territory of the Soviet Union, and embraces most of European Russia and all of Asiatic Russia, with the exception of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It is the political, military and economic weight of this key republic that has made the influence of the U.S.S.R. increasingly felt in world councils, and this weight would hardly be increased by the grant to the other fifteen republics of the right to

have their own foreign policy and armed forces. The numerical prestige of added votes at future United Nations conferences may therefore be discounted as a primary reason for the Kremlin's decision. Its main objects, so far as can be discerned are, first, to enhance the power of attraction of the U.S.S.R. for other nations which, in the continued absence of an effective international organization, may find themselves adrift without bearings following the defeat of Germany; and, second, to give the outward semblance of independence to those nations that may decide to steer their future course under the aegis of the Soviet Union, thus helping them to "save face" and possibly affording technical satisfaction to the signatories of the Atlantic Charter.

CULTURAL AUTONOMY ENCOURAGED.

This latest move in Soviet foreign policy is a direct outgrowth of the program that guided the formation of the U.S.S.R. in 1922. At that time the Soviet leaders purposely left the word "Russia" out of the name of the new Union, on the assumption that other soviet socialist republics, whenever and wherever formed, might eventually join the U.S.S.R. Actually, there is no doubt that the Soviet government has given great latitude to the more than 150 different races and nationalities that compose the U.S.S.R. to practice their own language, customs, and traditions—but not, until recently, their religious beliefs—provided they conformed with the over-all political and economic pattern of the dictatorship centered in Moscow and controlled by the Communist party. The various national groups have been represented as such in the upper chamber of the Supreme Council—the Council of Nationalities—which was preserved in the 1936 Constitution of the U.S.S.R. at the insistence of Stalin, himself a native of Georgia, one of the minority national groups in the Union.

It would, therefore, be entirely in accordance with the precedent set in 1922 for the U.S.S.R. to invite,

or induce, the entrance of other soviet socialist republics in the future—for example Poland under a régime sympathetic to that of Moscow, such as the Union of Polish Patriots, or Yugoslavia under a régime headed by Marshal Tito. Meanwhile, the Kremlin could answer criticisms from Britain and the United States—and the Russians are by no means insensitive to these criticisms—concerning Russia's pre-1941 absorption of Eastern Poland or the Baltic states by pointing out that these territories, since then incorporated into the U.S.S.R., will retain independence in matters of defense and foreign policy. The way in which this procedure will operate has been illustrated without delay by the appointment of Alexander Korneichuk, former Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., as Foreign Commissar of the Ukrainian S.S.R. It so happens that Korneichuk is the husband of Wanda Wassilewska, Polish writer who now heads the Union of Polish Patriots. Together they can—and may be expected—to make an appeal over the head of the Polish government in London to the Ukrainians of Eastern Poland to join the Ukrainian S.S.R.; a similar appeal can be made by the White Russian S.S.R. to the White Russians in Eastern Poland, and so on down the long border of the U.S.S.R. from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

U.S.S.R. FILLS VACUUM. The use that is being made by Stalin of the flexible formula of national cultural autonomy within the framework of a strongly centralized federation has already caused alarm in Washington and London, not to speak of some of the spokesmen for the small nations that lie in the path of the Russian advance against Germany. Two things must be borne in mind, however. First, the old adage that nature abhors a vacuum applies to international as to other human affairs. The vacuum which, we must hope, is soon to be left in Europe by the collapse of Hitler's "new order" should have been prepared for long ago—had Britain and the United States moved with political boldness and imagination—by the creation of a United

Nations organization capable both of adjusting impending conflicts and of using force to assure the security of all nations, large and small. The truth is that the Western powers have not moved very far toward international organization during the war, except on paper, and have confined their efforts at collaborative machinery largely to cooperation among themselves. In the absence of an over-all United Nations organization, it was to be expected that Russia, now on the crest of the wave, would use such methods as it considers best to achieve its own security against the possible resurgence of Germany after the war. While we have been debating the pros and cons of an international police force and a United Nations political council, the Russians have evolved their own version of both for Eastern Europe.

Second, neither Britain nor the United States has shown much concern in the past for the welfare of the peoples living in the uneasy borderlands between Germany and Russia. Nor have the Western powers been actually in a military position to render them effective aid against either of their powerful neighbors. The small countries of this long-contested area must find some basis for stability and recovery after the war if they are not to fall prey to further conflict and impoverishment. Many of their leaders have looked to the Western democracies for inspiration and aid—but, let us admit it frankly, have for the most part looked in vain. To say that they were really independent between 1919 and 1939, moreover, would be to disregard the pressures to which, in fact, they were almost constantly subjected by either Germany or Russia, or both. If they should now place their bets on cooperation with Russia, as Czechoslovakia already has done through the Russo-Czech treaty of mutual assistance, this should not come as a surprise to Britain and the United States—but rather as a reminder that we cannot expect to exercise power in any area of the world unless we are ready and willing to assume the responsibilities that go with power.

VERA MICHELES DEAN

DOMINIONS DIFFER ON FUTURE OF BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

The appeal made by Lord Halifax in Toronto on January 24 for a concerted post-war policy among the nations of the British Commonwealth suggests that this war, like the last, will precipitate important changes in the structure of the Commonwealth. It is evident, however, from the Canadian reaction to the Halifax proposal, on the one hand, and the development of Australian-New Zealand policy, on the other, that centralization is not equally attractive to all the Dominions and that the evolution of a new pattern will be a slow process.

THE HALIFAX PROPOSAL. Like Field Marshal Smuts in his speech of November 26, Lord Halifax envisaged a post-war world in which the United

States, the U.S.S.R., China and Britain would assume leadership in maintaining peace. Instead of looking, as Smuts did, to the support of Western Europe to give the United Kingdom equality with the other three, Halifax declared that "the British Commonwealth and Empire must be the fourth power." But for the Commonwealth to be effective, he said, all its members would have to pursue a common course in "foreign policy, defense, economic affairs, colonial questions and communications." This could be achieved, he assured his audience, without reversing the 75-year trend by which the Dominions had attained equality of status with Britain. Moreover, it would remove the dilemma in which every Dominion

has found itself at the outbreak of a major war: the dilemma that it must either join with Britain in a war arising out of a foreign policy concerning which it has had little or no voice, or must stay out, thereby risking the defeat of Britain and the disruption of the Commonwealth.

OTTAWA'S REACTION. Not unexpectedly, Prime Minister Mackenzie King rejected the Halifax thesis in addressing the House of Commons on January 31. He did not agree with the Smuts and Halifax concept of a peace based on a balance of strength between three or four great powers. This conception implies the inevitable rivalry of the great powers, he said, and to this Canada, "situated geographically between the United States and the Soviet Union, and at the same time a member of the British Commonwealth," could not give its support. On the contrary, Canada seeks to achieve the power essential for peace by creating an effective international system in which all peace-loving countries would co-operate.

In taking this position the Canadian Prime Minister undoubtedly reflected not only the sentiment of his own party but majority opinion in Canada. The Liberal and French Canadian press had already expressed opposition to the Halifax idea, while M. J. Coldwell, leader of the C.C.F. party, had flatly repudiated it. With an election due by June 1945, Mackenzie King—even if he had wished to reverse the no-commitment policy which he pursued during the inter-war years—could not afford to alienate either the French vote or that part of the electorate which at present wavers between Liberal and C.C.F. leadership. He did indicate, however, that he did not wish this question to become an election issue lest it interfere with the war effort. In view of Canada's attitude after World War I, when it took the lead in gaining autonomy for the Dominions, only a serious break

in the unity of the United Nations would bring about any rapid change in Canadian opinion on this question. Certainly Canada will adopt no course which would be seriously opposed in Washington.

AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND PACT. The two Dominions of the South Pacific—less secure than Canada, free from its biracial problem, and both in a post-election period—have already set their course toward a more centralized Commonwealth. Repeating suggestions he made earlier, Prime Minister John Curtin of Australia proposed on December 14, 1943 that a concerted Commonwealth policy be reached by instituting a series of conferences of prime ministers and establishing a permanent secretariat. More recently, in commenting on the Australia-New Zealand Agreement of January 21, 1944, both Herbert Evatt, Australian Minister for External Affairs, and Peter Fraser, New Zealand Prime Minister, expressed their desire to tighten Commonwealth bonds.

The January 21 pact illustrates the post-war views of the two Dominions. The most significant terms are: 1. establishment of what is in effect a defensive alliance between Canberra and Wellington; 2. support for a general international organization such as that outlined in the Moscow Declaration of November 1, 1943; 3. support for a regional council for defense and welfare in the South Pacific Islands, to include, in addition to the two signatories, the United States, Britain, and France; 4. support for an international air transport authority which would own and operate the great trunk routes of the world, failing which the two countries would support a system of air lines owned and operated by the governments of the British Commonwealth.

Australia and New Zealand apparently believe that close collaboration with the United States in defense and welfare arrangements for the South Seas and membership in an international organization with sufficient powers to operate international air transport need not be hindered by centralization of the Commonwealth. The Canadian government, on the other hand, is of the opinion that such a development in the Commonwealth would prove an obstacle to close relations with other countries—particularly the United States—and to the creation of an international organization which would guarantee freedom of action to the small countries. Whether this gap in Dominion thinking will be closed or narrowed depends largely on the shape of the post-war world and, in any case, will probably take considerable time.

HOWARD P. WHIDDEN, JR.

What is the Western economic stake in Asia? How much would it cost the metropolitan countries to give up their empires in the East? How will the rest of the world adjust itself to the rise of new nations in a free and industrialized Asia? READ—

INDEPENDENCE FOR COLONIAL ASIA— THE COST TO THE WESTERN WORLD

by Lawrence K. Rosinger

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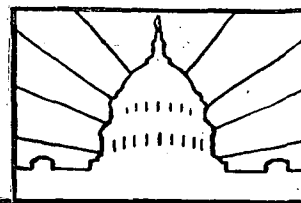
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Washington News Letter



FEB. 7.—On November 13, 1943 Marshal Pietro Badoglio said that he would "retire" as Italian Premier when Rome was liberated. The slow and arduous advance of the Allied armies has brought them within sight of Rome, and Washington is now counting on Badoglio to make good his pledge as a first step toward reorganization of Italy's government. The Administration is dissatisfied with that government, and concurs in one of the resolutions passed by the six anti-fascist groups which met on January 28 at Bari, demanding the abdication of King Victor Emmanuel. So far Britain has not officially disclosed whether it agrees with Washington.

Administratively Italy is divided into three parts. Sicily and the three southernmost provinces of the mainland are nominally governed by King Victor Emmanuel through the Badoglio régime, under the supervision of the British-American Allied Military Government. The Allied combat zone is subject wholly to military control; while German-held Italy is ostensibly a republic with Benito Mussolini as president, but with local officials disregarding Mussolini's leadership and dealing directly with the German military commanders.

CHANGE IMPENDS IN ITALY. The jurisdiction of the King and Badoglio is to be extended on February 10 to a northern boundary running from Salerno on the Tyrrhenian Sea to Barletta on the Adriatic. At that time AMG is to withdraw north of this boundary and transfer the supervision it has exercised over the Italian régime to the Armistice Commission. While the change is largely technical, since the Commission, like the AMG, is responsible primarily to the military, it paves the way for revision of Allied policy, which heretofore has upheld Badoglio and Victor Emmanuel—provided the United States and Britain can reach an understanding.

The president of the Armistice Commission is Gen. Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, commander of the Mediterranean area, who has designated Gen. Sir Harold Alexander, commander of the Fifth and Eighth Armies, as acting president. The deputy president is also a Britisher, Lt. Gen. F. N. Mason MacFarlane, former governor of Gibraltar. The Commission is divided into four sections, each of which is headed by a vice president: Gen. Alexander is vice president for the military section; Harold Caccia, of the British Foreign Office, for the political section; and Air Commodore Stansgate, RAF, for the administrative and economic section. The one American vice president is Capt. Ellery Stone, USNR,

for the communications section. The United States has two deputy vice presidents—Samuel Reber, of the State Department, in the political section; and Henry F. Grady, formerly of the Department of Commerce, in the administrative and economic section. The Commission's task will be to enforce compliance with the armistice signed by Badoglio on September 8, 1943.

President Roosevelt told newspapermen at his press conference on February 1 that the Italian people would be permitted to choose the kind of government they want, but that the time for the choice has not been set. Tight censorship has kept the American public uninformed of the political wishes of the Italians in Allied controlled territory, and news of public opinion in German Italy is rare. Reports that have reached the United States from southern Italy emphasize dissatisfaction with the King. On October 30 Count Sforza, former Italian Foreign Minister, said in Naples that he favored creation of a regency for the Prince of Naples, aged six, grandson of Victor Emmanuel. The same position has been taken by Benedetto Croce, distinguished Italian historian and long-time anti-Fascist.

Washington tentatively favors a regency for the Prince of Naples, who is in Switzerland with his mother, daughter of the late King Albert of the Belgians. It fears that a change to a republic at this juncture would slow down Italy's return to political and social stability. The Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee, which makes the principal military decisions for the Western Allies, has opposed any action that would endanger Victor Emmanuel's throne, on the ground that the Allied armies cannot risk having at their rear the disorder they believe might follow his departure. If changes are made when the Allied armies take Rome, the problem will be whether to drop the King or merely to broaden the base of his cabinet by the inclusion of more anti-fascists.

FOOD SUPPLY SHORT. Meanwhile, the Allied Military Government has found it difficult in the midst of combat to distribute the large quantities of food needed by the civilian inhabitants of the liberated areas. This shortage has caused resentment against the United States and Britain in southern Italy. However, in consequence of the visit to Italy by Adlai Stevenson, special agent of the Foreign Economic Administration, arrangements have been made in Washington to increase the flow of food to Italy from overseas.

BLAIR BOLLES

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